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ABSTRACT

A safety audit took place at McGill University (Quebec, Canada) with special consideration of women's feelings of safety on campus. Initially, a mini-audit took place at the urban campus in and around several buildings with a group of students, faculty and staff and a representative from the local action committee on violence. The administration was approached for authorization and support of a broader project for the university at large. Teams were formed and attended a 2-hour training session on safety audits and to emphasize the importance that women feel safe. The audit took place with 41 teams one evening for 2 hours. The audits were summarized into one page which is appended to this report. The report helped to develop a night route through campus as well as a map indicating the route, the position of telephones, and other safety information. The report itself was simultaneously released to administration, participants, and the public. Implementation of the report's recommendations has resulted in new emergency phones, improved lighting, additional patrol cars, increased patrol frequency and other measures. A key development has been an institution-wide heightened awareness of women's psychological safety. Appended are the audit summary, the map of the night route, and additional materials. (Contains 18 references.) (JB)

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Psychological Safety of Women on Campus

Sponsored by the Women in Literature and Life Assembly
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Presented by: Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber
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In recent years it has been acknowledged that women experience and evaluate their space differently from men and that ethnicity, race, class, age, ability and sexuality all have a direct bearing on how we experience our environments (METRAC, 1991). Women have begun to articulate the many dimensions of settings that merit scrutiny and change in order to avoid the considerable, and often unconscious, energy that is expended when our surroundings are physically and/or psychologically uncomfortable. Women's groups on campuses across the country are challenging institutions to study policies, practices, services as well as physical designs which produce a climate of apprehension and are therefore prejudicial to women.

In this presentation, I will describe a two-year, safety audit project which took place at my institution.

> A safety audit is a close evaluation of the physcial enviroment for safety factors. It is an educational tool and an action plan. ...The audit looks at the environment--at how a space is put together and how it enhances or reinforces a sense of safety... The goal of safety audits is to improve the physical environment in ways that reduce the opportunities for sexual harassment or sexual assaults and to make the environment more comfortable and accessible to all... The safety audit process validates women's

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> experience of the environment by acknowledging that women are the experts of their experience.
> (Women's campus safety audit guide, METRAC/COU)

Included in this description are the nature of the process, the difficulties, the results to date and some future directions which merit consideration.

The mini-audit

McGill University in Montreal is a large, decentralized institution in the heart of the city. Approximately 21,000 full-time day students attend the University. An additional 10,000 evening students are part of the Centre for Continuing Education. 52% of the 14,000 undergraduates are women.

In March 1992, the Advisory Committee on Women Students' Issues initiated and conducted a mini safety audit in and around several buildings on the McGill campus. The composition of the group included the students, professors and staff on the Advisory Committee, the Dean of a large faculty and the Director of Physical Resources as well as a representative from METRAC, Toronto (Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children). The impetus for the audit came from a tragic and violent shooting of 14 women at Ecole Polytechnique (a sister institution), a campus rape and a general perception that assaults against women were on the increase both in and around the University. The mini-audit was predicated on the notion that:

> "... every possbile avenue must be examined in order to avoid all incidents involving safety on campus and ... there is a responsibility to deal with the PERCEIVED physical and psychological safety needs of women in the McGill community... to increase the comfort level of women, and consequently everyone, particularly

after dark and during silent hours."
(Butler-Kisber et al., 1992, p. 2).

The METRAC representative walked us through the process at early twilight and helped the group to "make the familiar strange" and raise questions about the environment that had not consciously been addressed before. A summary of the exercise was submitted to the Advisory Committee by the METRAC representative and resulted in approval of a recommendation from the Dean of Students to do a campus-wide audit. The Dean of Students delegated the work to the Advisory Committee which formed a small subcommittee to complete the task.

Involving the University-at-large

The original involvement of the METRAC representative as an" outside expert", the Dean of Arts and the Director of Physical Resources as well as approval from the Dean of Students gave a legitimacy to the pilot effort and subsequent campus-wide task. The next problem was how to retain ownership for the project in order to "research the work from below, rather than from above" as Dagg and Thompson (1988) would suggest and at the same time generate commitment for the exercise from the University as a whole.

It was decided to approach the University through the Vice-Principal Academic Dean's Working Group. Since McGill is fairly decentralized where faculties and other such units enjoy relative autonomy, without a university-wide commitment of some sort, there was the danger that even if the audit were implemented the recommendations might never be realized.

The project was presented to this group as fundamental to the quality of all academic life. The Deans were asked to support it by appointing a delegate who would then become part of an audit team

that would survey the buildings and surrounding areas of the faculty or unit for which each Dean had responsibility. In retrospect, the academic route carried momentum. The Dean who had participated in the pilot study helped to garner support. The Deans were reassurred that their delegates would ensure a "faculty perspective" in the process. At the same time it was a way of keeping the Deans informed about and committed to the work. Similarly, the involvement of the Director of Physical Resources made it easier to get custodial staff participation (which had direct links to McGill security) and the funds to train the teams for the process. The students on the audit Subcommittee were given the task of finding sufficient student volunteers to equip each of the subsequent 41 audit teams of 4, with 2 students, to ascertain gender balance and an equitable student-staff ratio. This responsibility also gave them the opportunity to recruit feminist participants.

Team formation and training

Lists of teams were drawn up and circulated to the Deans and their delegates and then all participants attended a 2-hour training session given by Connie Guberman from METRAC who had already worked with other institutions on safety audits. Again, the external expert provided weight and legitimacy to the project. In addition to orienting the teams to the open-ended audit questionnaire and the fundamental ideas underlying the exercise, this forum helped to elicit and refute some of the sexist notions about women's safety that certain participants brought with them. One of the key shifts in thinking we were hoping to achieve was the understanding that issues of women's safety include psychological safety. We were trying to increase the understanding that women need to FEEL safe as well as be safe. Without this perception, low incident statistics are only partially indicative of campus safety. During the training sessions it was emphasized that the elaborated METRAC questionnaire that was to be used in the audit was

structured to encourage the elicition of feelings and perceptions as part of the data.

The audit process

At twilight on March 10, 1992, 41 teams met at their assigned buildings and for approximately 2 hours, audited the interiors and immediate exterior surroundings of each. They were asked to keep copious notes using the audit questions as a guide, and then to integrate their information and submit this to the Subcommittee using two audit forms for an interior and exterior report. It took until June of the same year to receive all the reports. The open-ended nature of the survey, the large differences in audited areas and the composition of the teams produced interesting formats and variation. The rich and idiosyncratic qualitative data raised the usual issues that qualitative inquirers face- how to present the information and to counteract questions concerning plausibility/validity.

The audit report

We grappled with how to retain the individual voices of the women which were so descriptively documented in the audits, to persuade the would-be quantitative scrutineers of the legitimacy of the process and results, and to get the recommendations implemented. To do this, each audit was reduced to a one-page (approximately), individual summary of the area surveyed. These summary reports included location, descriptions, functions, hours, observations and notations as well as the specific recommendations outlined in the report (see appendix). All audit summaries were included in the appendix of the final report. It should be noted that the inclusion of these summaries in the report was perceived by a few Univerity staff as overly negative, however, the response from most, in particular the women of the community, was extremely

positive. They were pleased that the nature and details of their concerns had not been glossed over by generalities.

Maria Portela, the research assistant who helped with the data analysis, was a graduate student studying architecture. Her expertise facilitated the task of compiling all the information about dark and isolated areas and then displaying this graphically on a map of the McGill campus. Using this data, we were able to make the case for developing a Night Route (see appendix) and to obtain some immediate resources to increase and concentrate safety and security measures along this route. This Night Route Map outlines the optimal way of crossing the campus after dark and includes where the new phones are located and other pertinent information. Sightlines have been cleared, lighting has been enhanced and security patrols this route more frequently. The map is distributed to all new students and as extensively as possible across the University.

The open-ended questions and recommendations were grouped into common categories, collapsed and expanded appropriately to encompass all the data and ultimately classified into 14 dimensions. Summary tables of the indoor and outdoor audit recommendations were presented indicating the frequency of the various recommendations classified by category and priority (see example in appendix). The most important recommendations and comments were elaborated upon and interpreted further. Thirteen recommendations came out of the report. These included the need for much improved signage and lighting, increased security, emergency communications and incident reporting, and a co-ordinating committee reporting to a vice-principal to ensure the recommendations would be implemented and that audits would be done regularly.

Releasing the report became a delicate balancing act. The members of the Subcommittee responsible for the exercise all had to

agree to the recommendations and sign off. Meanwhile a tragic event at a sister university in which a professor shot four colleagues had suddenly put safety high on the University's agenda. The Administration began pressing for the report in mid-October 1992. The report was finally released in early December. Fortunately, a responsive Vice-principal was persuaded that confidential access to a draft of the report could potentially undermine the whole process and he recinded his request. The report was released to the Administration, sent to participants and made public simultaneously. The university-wide involvement, the methodology employed and the distribution seemed to contibute to the generally favourable response. A strong letter of commendation to the Subcommittee from the Principal of the University no doubt contributed to the momentum of the next stage in the process.

Implementation

In January 1993, a Committee on the Personal Safety of Women in the University was established, reporting to a senate committee chaired by a vice-principal. It began the task of implementing the recommendations. This work is still underway. To date, 8 additional emergency phones of the most sophisticated type have been added to the campus. Lighting has been increased in some key areas and mechanisms for reporting and replacing light outages and making requests for improving sightline obstructions have been put in place. A third patrol car has been added and patrol frequency has been increased. A new software package that will interface incident location with McGill security and Montreal police is being installed. The voluntary, student-run Walk-Safe Network has been given some financial support and the University has agreed to include the necessary expertise when adding or replacing signage. While the work is by no means over, perhaps most rewarding has been that, increasingly, upper level administrators and others are referring to women's psychological safety.

Implications

1. The audit process is useful both for the concrete kinds of changes that can result from it and the consciousness-raising it provides. However, there is no doubt that the way the process is organized and implemented has a direct bearing on the degree of commitment and subsequent results.

2. The notion of psychological safety should extend beyond the idea of perceived physical safety and include any context in which women in some sense do not feel safe or comfortable. The whole issue of sexual harassment is naturally a part of this. But it also includes contexts which have been referred to as hostile environments (Sandler & Paludi, 1993); places and situations in which women are hindered or expend unnecessary energy because the environment is either blatantly or subtley unsafe or uncomfortable. The use of a "Hostile Environment Log" (see appendix) has been an interesting way to initiate and generate discussion about psychological safety with other groups.

3. We need to develop ways to "audit" contexts from the "bottom up" and to extend these audits beyond the university and college level to the high schools and elementary schools. Only recently have educators begun to realize just how pertinent the notion of women and girls' safety is to our schools and how perhaps inadvertently, but overly accepting we have been about what constitutes admissible attitudes, behaviours, policies and practices.

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APPENDICES

AUDIT SUMMARY

BUILDING INFORMATION

NAME OF THE BUILDING: Bldg.

CAMPUS SECTOR: 7

FUNCTION AND HOURS: Classrooms, laboratories (plant, animal, human), offices.

Weekday hours: 07:00 - 22:00

Weekends: Closed

Summer hours: 07:00 - 18:00

OUTDOOR AUDIT

SPECIFIC LOCATION/ DESCRIPTION: Approach to building is very isolated. No visibility or audibility from street. Dark, frightening.

OBSERVATIONS:

-Overall lighting is poor. Many lights were out at the time of the audit. Pedestrian paths are poorly illuminated and signs or maps are very poorly illuminated.

-Signage is very poor. There are no signs for emergency assistance, wheelchair access, building identification, business hours or maps. For someone not familiar with the place manoevering would be difficult.

-From courtyard to street, there are corners and columns that obstruct vision. Sightlines are obstructed in alley between garage and Law Building by parked cars on Drummond St. and in the garage.

-The area feels isolated and is not patrolled regularly. A call for help is unlikely to be heard. The security guard is in building lobby which is sealed, and the street is too far.

-A person's movements are predictable and no alternative route is easily visible, especially in walkway under loading area which leads to garage.

-Overall design is poor. The place is too spread out.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

-Security personnel should be provided during off-hours. The courtyard should be foot-patrolled.

-Padlocked doors should be replaced with magnetic locks and alarms so that exit is possible in emergency case.

-Signage should be improved.

-Lighting should be improved and regularly maintained in all areas.

-On north side, in driveway between Stewart and McIntyre buildings speed bumps are needed. Handrails should be provided for the steps which get very slippery in winter.

-Phone (campus line) should be installed at front door so people without key cards can call to someone in building. An emergency phone should be installed between buildings.

-Crumbling courtyard pavement and stairs need repair. It makes wheelchair access dangerous and difficult.

-Wheelchair access should be provided on west side from Drummond to West wing/courtyard.

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INDOOR AUDIT

SPECIFIC LOCATION/ DESCRIPTION: North and West blocks: The building absolutely needs better security. Many people work after hours and do not feel safe. Building is big, confusing, isolated, frightening and creepy.

OBSERVATIONS:

-Lighting is poor. After hours, hallway lights are turn out even when there are people working in labs. Switches are difficult to find in the dark.

-Overall signage is very poor. Floor plans, building names, location signs, emergency assistance location, direction of exit doors are not posted.

-Wheelchair accessibility is poor.

-There are many dead-end corridors, alcoves, sharp corners, machines and locker areas where someone could be hiding. Also, buildings are interconnected by tunnels and hallways which are isolated and not monitored.

-Emergency assistance is not easily available. The building is soundproof. Phones are not provided in all locations. Washrooms are in between floors. Nobody would hear a call for help in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

-Mirrors should be installed in all blind corridors.

-Overall signage should be improved.

-Bases of all stairwells should be fenced off (screens).

-Machinery should be removed from hallways and pushed into alcoves.

-Regular/permanent security sweep for all floors, washrooms, and the like, especially after hours is needed. ID cards should be checked and visitors recorded after hours.

-A 24-hour maintenance service should be available to replace burned out lights, etc.

-Phones are needed on upper floors

-Frequent panic buttons or emergency intercoms should be provided on all floors.

-Light switch systems should be improved.

-More wheelchair accessible washrooms should be provided.

-Garage area and its access should be made safer, more appealing and functional.

INDOOR AUDIT

SPECIFIC LOCATION/ DESCRIPTION: South block Security needs to be improved. Area is well-lit, but it is convoluted, isolated, soundproof and has poor signage.

OBSERVATIONS:

-Overall lighting is satisfactory, though some pedestrian walkways are poorly illuminated on west side.

-Overall signage is very poor.

-It is difficult to see ahead. There are many places where someone could be hiding, such as men's washroom in South 3, lockers under stairs in South 1, pillars, corners, some tunnels from south block to west block, etc.

-The area is patrolled once per afternoon/evening. Emergency assistance is not readily available. Some areas -psychology labs and the phytotron- need better patrolling.

-A person's movements are predictable and alternative routes are not easily accessible at all times, e.g. tunnel to west block.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

-Elevator for wheelchair access to upper levels should be provided.

-Security systems should be installed: panic buttons on psychology labs and phytotron, security mirrors, cameras and panic buttons on tunnels.

-Signage should be improved. Directional and floor map signs should be provided.

-Some doors should be removed to allow calls for help to be heard.

-Areas under stairwells should be fenced off, lockers should be removed from under stairs in South 1, and their distribution inside locker rooms should be re-arranged; phones should be located in visible and safe areas, e.g. south 1 between washrooms.

-Light switch systems should be re-defined or relocated.

-Regular security patrol should be provided.

INDOOR/OUTDOOR AUDIT

SPECIFIC LOCATION/
DESCRIPTION: Garage and Loading Dock, Bldg. Awful, dark, isolated, convoluted and confusing, very dangerous.

OBSERVATIONS:

-Lighting is very poor. Pedestrian walkways are very poorly illuminated, especially the access from North 2 and alleyway.

-Signage is very poor. Most areas do not have signs.

-It is very difficult to see ahead. There are places, such as pillars, alcoves, loading dock, alley, stairwells leading from one level to another, etc. where someone could be hiding.

-The area feels isolated. Emergency assistance is not easily available. The whole area is considered a potential assault site.

-Overall maintenance is poor. There is some litter on and under the loading dock and in the alley. In the garage acid leaks from pipes have caused damages to paint on cars.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

-Lighting should be improved, especially for outdoor access, out the North block 2nd level, out the loading dock, stairs form North 2, etc. Walls should be painted in a light color.

-Adequate signage should be provided. Building hours should be posted.

-Maintenance should be improved. Garage door should be repaired. Garbage on and under loading dock in North 3 should be removed.

-In North 3, the subterranean area which is beside the stairs descending to exit door on loading dock should be screened off. Alcoves in garage should be eliminated.

-Wheelchair access should be provided from inside the garage.

-Constant security sweeps should be provided, surveillance cameras should be installed.

-Exit doors should open from inside (bar system) in case of emergency.

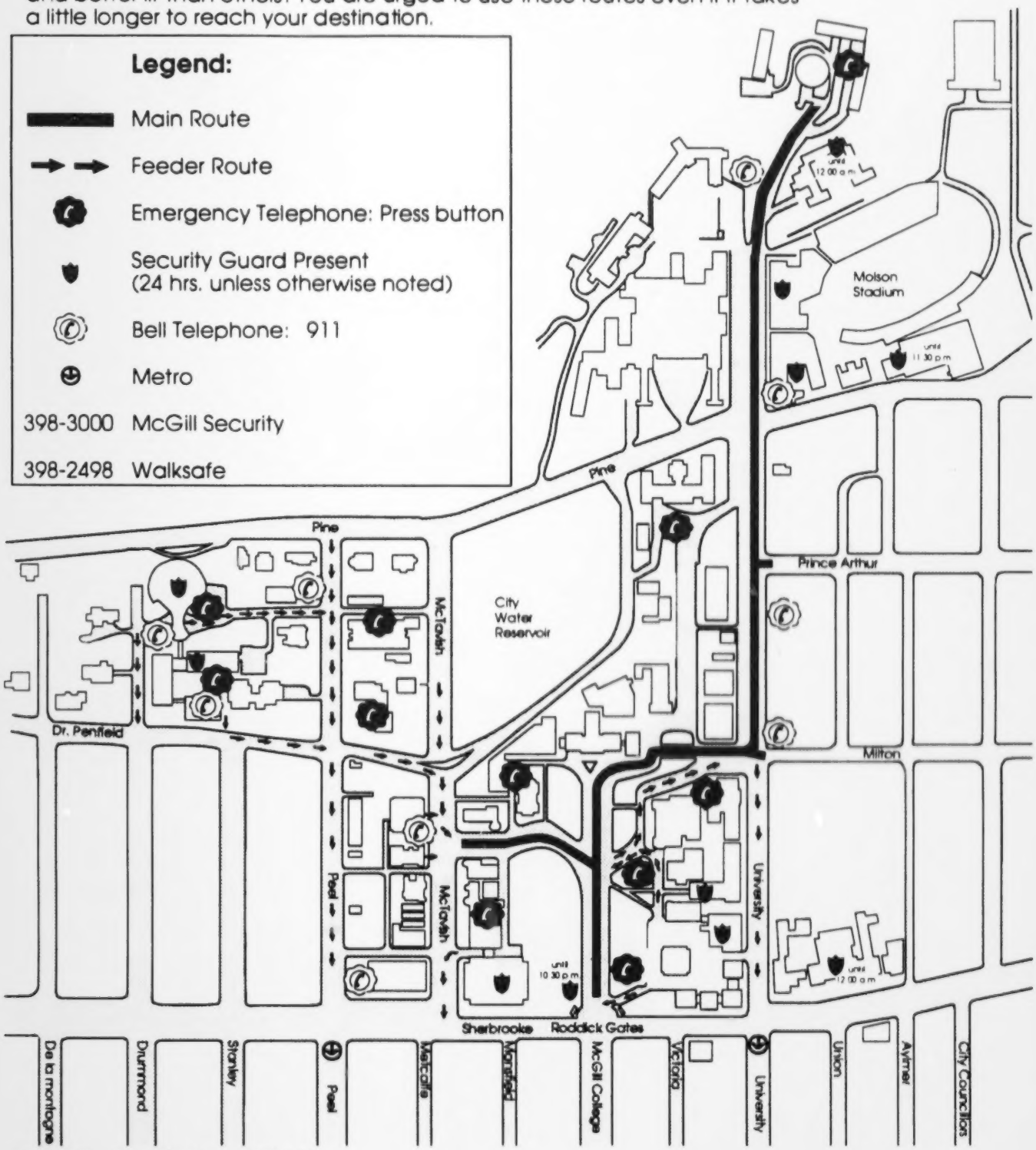
McGill

Night Route

The map below outlines an East-West and North-South route for crossing the campus after dark. These routes have been chosen because they are less isolated, more open and better lit than others. You are urged to use these routes even if it takes a little longer to reach your destination.

Legend:

- Main Route
- Feeder Route
- Emergency Telephone: Press button
- Security Guard Present (24 hrs. unless otherwise noted)
- Bell Telephone: 911
- Metro
- 398-3000 McGill Security
- 398-2498 Walksafe



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1. LIGHTING: All comments related to lighting systems and the degree and quality of illumination they provide.

2. SIGNAGE: All comments related to the provision of information, preventative or warning signs as well as their adequacy and quality.

3. SECURITY AND PATROL: All comments referring to security including the availability of emergency assistance, patrols, and surveillance.

4. ACCESS SCHEDULES: All comments relating to building hours including access/exit during silent hours and weekends and door-locking schedules.

5. KEY/LOCKING SYSTEMS: All comments about special access systems, door locks and the control of access to, or within, buildings.

6. MAINTENANCE: All comments about the conditions of buildings regarding cleaning, need for repairs and level of maintenance including references to emergency systems, exit doors, garbage and snow removal and trimming of trees and bushes.

7. EMERGENCY PHONES: All comments related to emergency phones, adequate signage to identify their locations and the advertising of emergency phone numbers.

8. RE-DESIGN: All comments concerning the spatial reorganization or layout of public/private areas including comments about sightlines, room distribution and frequently used and/or isolated areas.

9. MIRRORS: All comments about the need for strategically-placed mirrors to enhance sightlines and increase comfort level.

10. WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: All comments related to access for the disabled including signs to identify access locations.

11. PAY PHONES: All comments related to the provision, location and advertisement of pay phones in buildings.

12. ISOLATED AND DARK AREAS: All comments about areas that are reported as uncomfortable for their users.

13.SAFETY INFORMATION: All comments regarding the availability of information about safety policies and procedures in emergency situations.

14.FIRST AID SUPPLIES: Includes recommendations about the provision of first aid kits and supplies.

Summary of outdoor audit recommendations

A total of 38 outdoor audits was submitted. The following table contains the frequency of the recommendations classified by category and priority.

Table 1:

RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY ORDER								
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	TOTAL
LIGHTING	17	11	4	1	-	-	-	-	33
SIGNAGE	11	6	1	2	-	-	-	-	20
MAINTENANCE	1	4	2	3	1	-	-	-	11
SECURITY/PATR.	2	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	8
ACCESS SCHED.	2	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	6
KEY/LOCK SYST.	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	3
MIRRORS	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
RE-DESIGN	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
ISOLATED/DARK	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
SAFETY INFO.	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
PAY PHONES	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
WHEELCHAIR ACC.	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1

According to the priorities submitted by the teams, the most important recommendations and comments are as follows:

1. Lighting was mentioned frequently and given a high priority. Recommendations related to outdoor lighting occurred in 86.8% of the reports. It was classified as a first priority in 51.5% of the these and as a second in 33.3%. Suggestions for lighting improvements frequently mentioned installing floodlights on top of buildings to illuminate access to doors.

2. Importance of signage is indicated by the frequency it was mentioned and the priority it was given. Recommendations relating to the provision of signs in outdoor areas were made in 52.6% of the submissions. In 55% of these it was a first priority; in 30%, it was a second.

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT LOG

NAME:_____INSTITUTION:_____
WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TALK FURTHER? YES( ) NO( )
IF YES, ADDRESS:_____TEL:( )-_____

DESCRIBE AN EVENT/INCIDENT, IN WHICH YOU OBSERVED OR PLAYED A PART, THAT WAS HOSTILE FOR A GIRL OR WOMAN.

WHAT 5 WORDS BEST DESCRIBE THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE EVENT OCCURRED?

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____

SUMMARIZE YOUR OVERALL IMPRESSIONS ABOUT WHAT TRANSPIRED.

DID ANY INTERVENTIONS TAKE PLACE DURING OR FOLLOWING THE EVENT? IF YES, PLEASE DESCRIBE, IF NO, EXPLAIN OR HYPOTHESIZE WHY NOT:

WHAT CONCRETE STEPS COULD BE TAKEN IN YOUR SETTING/INSTITUTION TO ENSURE SUCH AN EVENT/INCIDENT WOULD NOT BE REPEATED?

LBK.MCG.PSYCH.SAFETY